



Decision pending says EPA

It could be another two weeks before the Environmental Protection Agency declares a public health emergency in Libby, reported Wendy Thomi, community involvement coordinator, at the March 28 Community Advisory Group meeting.

Thomi said she was passing along a report from on-site coordinator Paul Peronard.

Previously, at a CAG meeting, Peronard reported EPA Director Christy Todd Whitman was supportive of the Region 8 Office's work and direction in Libby.

However, there are many issues associated with both the determination and the removal of vermiculite insulation that require further deliberation.

EPA has never made a determination of a public health emergency using its Superfund authority, therefore the decision whether to use this authority at Libby must be carefully considered, he said.

Peronard is seeking the health emergency declaration to receive the authority to remove vermiculite insulation from Libby area homes and businesses.

Superfund listing does not give the EPA the authority to remove insulation from structures unless there is a health emergency.

"We are doing the planning and gearing up the contractors as if we were approved to take advantage of the summer construction season," Thomi told CAG last week.

Jim Christianson, the Libby Superfund cleanup coordinator, is planning an extensive sampling season with the goal to test nearly every home in Libby, she continued.

Also, Thomi reported that the EPA

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got the go-ahead to replace Libby High School track equipment that was found to be contaminated with asbestos fibers last year. Thomi said the agency was trying to determine if they could get the replacement equipment quickly or would the track team be better off if the money was given to the school.

The LHS track had an underlying base of vermiculite, which is contaminated by tremolite asbestos. In several areas along the track, it was discovered that various activities had brought the toxic material to the surface. Also, the school was planning on resurfacing the track last summer.

The school district had requested the area be tested and

Comments taken on Superfund listing

Based on Gov. Judy Martz' request for adding Libby to the National Priorities List for cleanup, the EPA filed a listing request in the Federal Register on Feb. 26. The public has until April 29 to comment on the governor's request to declare Libby a Superfund site.

After the 60-day comment period, the EPA will respond to the comments and make the final decision on whether or not to list the site on the

NPL. Final priority list status must be determined, however, before the EPA can use the Superfund Trust fund to pay for long-term cleanup.

People interested in commenting on the proposed NPL listing should send comments and three copies to: Docket Coordinator Headquarters U.S. EPA; CERCLA Docket Office (5201G) 401 M Street SW, Washington, DC 20460

cleaned.

The track remains unfinished, forcing the LHS team to hold all of its meets out of town this year. Work on the track is expected this spring.